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The 2024 Arizona legislative session officially began today, as members of the House and Senate gathered to hear Governor Hobbs' second State of the State address. The Governor sought a bipartisan tone, repeatedly highlighting actions she enacted last year with Republicans' support, but also emphasized priorities that Republicans staunchly oppose.

In her speech, the Governor called for action on:

- Border security
  Criticizing the federal government's failure to act to secure the U.S.-Mexico border, the Governor asked the legislature to support her efforts to increase funding to border communities, law enforcement, and the fight against fentanyl.

- Budget
  The Governor said she will oppose any effort to cut vital services for Arizonans, and pledged to protect public safety and public education while reigning in wasteful spending and putting limits on "unaccountable programs." (More details will be available Friday when the Governor releases her budget proposal.)

- Economy
  Praising the role the Arizona Commerce Authority plays in Arizona's economic development, the Governor called on the legislature to reauthorize it. (The Authority will expire in statute unless the legislature acts to extend it.)

- Education
  As expected, the Governor criticized the continued growth of the state's Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) program and referenced the key points of her plan to add more oversight. She also called on legislators to seek a permanent solution to the aggregate expenditure limit (AEL) that caps school spending and urged policymakers to prioritize a pay increase for teachers and school support staff. She also urged the legislature to work with her to send voters an option to extend the Proposition 123 education funding.

  The Governor outlined long-term funding initiatives she will prioritize when there is surplus state funding – including dual enrollment programs and student scholarships.

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The Governor also focused on higher education, praising the public universities' focus on the state's medical workforce shortage and increased access to healthcare. She called on lawmakers to help establish a new engineering-focused medical school at ASU, double the size of medical schools at the University of Arizona, and start a new medical school at NAU focused on serving rural and tribal communities.

- Healthcare

  The Governor received enthusiastic applause from both sides of the aisle when she criticized assisted living and sober living facilities that have abused vulnerable populations. She called on the legislature to support proposals that will increase penalties and oversight for those facilities, expand adult protective services' authority to act when there are problems, establish standardized credentials for memory care programs, and prevent facilities from hiding their records of problematic behavior.

  She asked policymakers to collaborate with her to find ways to lower the cost of medical care. She also asked for support of a forthcoming proposal that will require advance notice of prescription drug price increases, limit the use of pharmacy benefit managers, and create a new Prescription Drug Affordability and Transparency Division to cap prices on commonly used drugs.

  As expected, the Governor restated her opposition to any bill that limits access to abortion or criminalizes doctors who perform abortions. She urged the legislature to expand access to reproductive healthcare, repeal the state's territorial ban on all abortions, enact the Right to Contraception Act, and limit the collection of data on every abortion in Arizona.

- Housing

  Praising last year's bipartisan investments in housing assistance programs, the Governor pledged to support any legislative efforts to further expand housing affordability and access. She announced an Arizona Is Home Mortgage Assistance Program intended to help working-class families with down-payment assistance and mortgage payment relief.

- Infrastructure & Technology

  The Governor pledged to ensure every community in Arizona has access to high-speed broadband access.

- Water

  With sharp criticism for lawmakers and policymakers who have blocked proposed changes to groundwater management, the Governor called for action to expand rural groundwater management options and close "loopholes" that enable build-to-rent and wildcat developments. She pledged to act even if the legislature chooses not to, and hinted at a new Alternative Designation of Water Resources program that would enable the Department of Water Resources to grant a 100-year assured water supply designation to water providers and communities that contribute new water sources and reduce groundwater pumping.

Click here to read the transcript of the Governor's speech.

What's Next?

Legislators will spend the rest of the week in committee hearings. Few bills will advance this week, but hundreds will be introduced, and committee agendas will grow longer in the weeks ahead.

On Friday, Governor Hobbs will release a budget proposal with additional details on her plans for policy changes and budget priorities.